10

10 ORIENTATION--information especially likely to be needed by users of a file as a frame of reference for understanding the materials classified elsewhere; organization of the file, special coding decisions, and evaluation of the file.

GUIDE TO THE NE6 BELLACOOLA FILE

[The Bellacoola (a corruption of the word "bilxula" by which name they are known to the Kwakiutl) are a small tribe living along the coasts of Dean Inlet and Bentinck Arm at about 52° north latitude in British Columbia, and along the Bella Coola River which empties into North Bentinck Arm. Subdivisions of this tribe are the Talio, Kimsquit and Dean River peoples.

The eight sources, all in English, which comprise this file, deal with this tribe in the period prior to 1924 before socio-cultural acculturative effects and influences brought about a complete breakdown of the aboriginal Bellacoola culture complex.

The two primary sources for this file which give the most complete introduction to Bellacoola society are 1 and 2: McIlwraith. While these two sources concentrate on religion, social organization, the potlatch, rank, the Kusiut society and its ceremonials, and mythology, there is also a great deal of information to be found in these works on warfare, games and stories, the life cycle, medicine, magic and taboo and sorcery. 2: McIlwraith also contains four appendices, with some limited data on material culture (olachen processing, canoe construction, preparation of cedar bark, and manufacture of paint), string figure construction, lists of native fauna and flora, and a Bellacoola-English vocabulary list. Source number 6: Boas in this file also presents a brief general survey of Bellacoola culture and might

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possibly be read by the researcher for a general background prior to his perusal of sources 1 and 2: McIlwraith with their more detailed data. 3: Smith deals with the importance of magic and sorcery in the society (also covered in 1: McIlwraith and to some extent in 6: Boas). 4: Smith is a brief comparative study of the Bellacoola and Carrier Indians (NE 7) regarding beliefs concerning insects found in the common environment. 5: Smith deals with another important aspect of Bellacoola ethnography, that of the use of native medicine concocted from various plants, animals and other materials in the environment (see also sources 1, 2, 3 and 6). This source also gives comparative data for the Carrier (NE7), Gitksan (Tsimshian NE 15), Sekani (NE14) and Chilcotin (NE8). 6: Boas presents a general survey of the Bellacoola as they existed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, with emphases on names and locations of settlements, "gentes," secret societies (see also sources 1, 2, 7 and 8), the potlatch, customs related to the life cycle, religion and shamanism (see also sources 1, 2, 3, and 7), warfare and medicine. 7: Boas while dealing primarily with a resumé of some of the basic Bellacoola myths and native cosmology, also presents data on spirits and gods, the shaman, beliefs about animals (see also 4: Smith), village names and locations (see also sources 1, and 6), and the secret societies. 8: Boas deals basically

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with the secret societies and the potlatch, and is primarily a repetition of the information given in 6: Boas on these aspects.

The topics best covered in this file are social organization, religion, the secret societies and their ceremonials, the potlatch, rank, mythology and Bellacoola stories. Data on material culture are seriously lacking, with only some minor accounts being given in 1: McIlwraith (Appendix A), and 6 and 7: Boas, the last two sources of which briefly illustrate and describe some of the special dance masks used in the ceremonies of the secret societies. Information on kinship is also lacking in this file, with most of the data available being found in 1: McIlwraith, and 6: Boas.

Special marking decisions are as follows:

Potlatches--556
Potlatches at which dead visit--769
Potlatches to validate (receive) a name--553, 425
Name transferral in marriage (at engagement, at marriage or rebuying ceremonies)--553, 425
"Rebuying" of wife by her family--583
Investment through gifts given which are expected to be returned with interest--426

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Insults--558, 578
"Power" connected with human essence on clothing, blood, etc.--789
Mythological tally posts and wash basins--773, 777
Totem poles--778, 211
"Ceremonial chastity"--785, 831
Sisaok Siki--575
"Chiefs" or men of prestige and wealth at potlatches--622
Ancestral family--614.]

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